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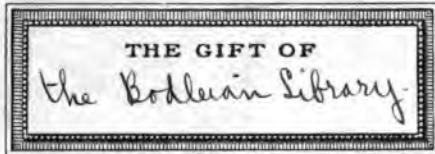
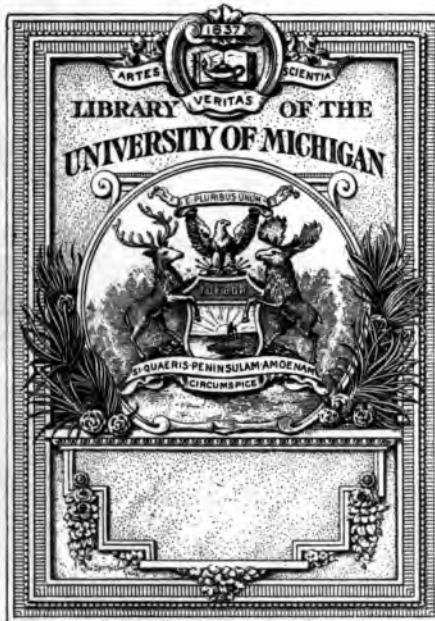
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HOLYROOD

THE NEWDIGATE POEM

MCMVIII

JULIAN S. HUNKLE



HOLYROOD.



HOLYROOD

THE
NEWDIGATE POEM

1908

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—
MCMVIII.

*“Resolve to be thyself; and know, that he,
who finds himself, loses his misery.”*

HOLYROOD.

I.

KING DAVID of the Scots upon his throne
Sat solitary, brooding, chin on hand ;
His spirit on the wings of thought was flown—
Soaring and circling in the blue, it scanned
With eager eyes the fair and spreading land,
The country of the future, far away
Fading in Time's blue haze : ah, there he planned—
What glories and what beauties, who shall say ?
But though Night's dreams are gone, we have the deeds
of Day.

II.

God-fearing and devout, remembering
That earthly kingdoms all are held in fee
From One, the Greatest and Eternal King,
To His divine and glorious Majesty
A many shrines he vowed, that worthily
Should testify to God throughout the land.
And happier than his namesake monarch he—
Than David of the Jews: for his own hand
Executor might be of all his heart had planned.

III.

So to the glory of God the Abbeys rose
Across the lowlands: gleaming here and there
A soaring spire, or tower majestic shows
To the shepherd watcher on the hills. Ah, fair
They raise their shining turrets o'er the square
Of dark, broad-buttressed dormitory and hall,
Cloister and church: across the smoke-blue air
He sees them, and the town, that nestles all,
Like timid birds, around the mother Abbey's wall.

IV.

Most famous name among them all, there stood
By Edinburgh, dweller on the hill,
The noble Abbey of the Holy Rood.—
As at a river's mouth, the flood-tides fill
The channels and the winding creeks, until
The estuary flats from shore to shore
Are one great lake: so, without haste, and still,
The tides of Life around the Abbey pour,
In far-spread beauty widening, rising, more and more.

V.

But at the appointed hour the waters turn,
Turn, and flow back, and leave the land-locked bay.
One vast plain only can the eye discern
Of muddy sand—a dull expanse of grey,
Save its one silver, twisting waterway:
No ship can sail there now; but down there speed
The whistling flocks of sea-fowl—here they stay
The time of ebb, among the stranded weed,
Stippling the oozy marge with prints of feet, to feed.

VI.

So back again from Holyrood there flowed
The sparkling sea of life with ebbing tide.
In silence now, no longer the abode
Of kings and princes in empurpled pride,
Nor sole in grandeur, but on every side
Hemmed in with mean and petty streets, it lies,
By gaunt, smoke-belching chimneys overspied ;
And trooping through, the mob with eager eyes
Gapes at the solemn relics of the centuries.

VII.

But he who comes alone, and brings a soul
Attuned to catch the sweet and plaintive song
Of Life, and the far-off majestic roll
Of Universal symphonies,—not long
Shall he be there before he feels a throng
Of forms invisible that brush him by,
And strain to whisper to him ; but their tongue
To us is dumb : we scarce can hear them sigh,
Those clinging memories that live where great deeds die.

VIII.

They haunt the heritage of ages past,
 Yet of the common people are not known ;
In inmost secret nooks they hide them fast
 Before such noisy comers. But their own,
 Their chosen one, will be inspired, and shown
Light filling Time's dark alleys to the brim,
 Will see those shadowy forms he had thought blown
By winds of Fate about those vistas dim,
Puppets no more, but men—they too are men, like him !

IX.

And first the hooded monks, along the years
 At quiet work throughout the quiet days :
Afield go some, or e'er the sun appears,
 On business of the soil ; at home there stays
 One band, that labours to show forth God's praise
In books fair-writ, with pigment glowing deep
 Gemming the page ; and some, in rapt amaze,
 Their visionary meditations keep,
And let the slow sun round their cell unheeded creep.

X.

Yet all a common life to one end living ;
In their simplicity of ordered round
Now and again themselves a breach forgiving
To welcome kingly guests. Then does the sound
Of herald trumpets and the pipes astound
The quiet walls : in sombre rangèd line
The monks on either side the gate are found :
Between, the courtiers, bright, fantastic shine,
And enter : through the place the gay life runs like wine.

XI.

The friendly monks beside the mighty town
Soon found such favour with the Scottish kings,
The royal abbey for their own they crown
With palace royal.—As the comfortings
Of all religion first well up in springs
Open and fresh ; soon, man-enclosed, they flow
In channelled marble ; yet this pomp but brings
A lesser purity and stream more slow :
So does the courtly life the old plain ways o'ergrow.



XII.

Henceforth the abbey has the lower place—
Henceforth the palace rises into fame.
Births, deaths, in turn these four walls' narrow space,
Feasts, councils, murders, coronations frame.
The poet king here from his prison came
Home with an English bride : the Rosebud here
Wedded the Thistle-scion, that the shame
Of sister-lands at war might disappear.
Vain wish, fond hope, we know ! For Flodden looms, how
near !

XIII.

Hence, from a troubled and imprisoned youth
The next king to a troubled life did fly :
Clung to the old, yet part the new-found truth
Believed ; and, after Solway Moss, to die
Half-glad, he left poor Scotland's crown to lie
Unworn, for years of strife and blood and shame,
Till Mary, his fair wayward child, put by
Her foreign home, and mother's rule, and came
Happy and young—and yet to strike the land afame.



XIV.

For thronèd kings and queens must stop their ears
 To elemental Nature's passion-call,
Or, like this Queen of Scots, in hopeless tears
 After a high tempestuous course will fall.
 Happy was she at first, and Holyrood Hall
The one spot in the land where mirth could show,
 And unrebuked; but yet, with mirth and all
She had brought passion and, with passion, woe—
Soon here, agasp to see the blood of Rizzio.

XV.

—More woe, when with the crash that killed a king
 Woke startled Holyrood at dead of night:
Most, when it saw her, poor, heart-broken thing
 With Bothwell's callousness, in lonely plight
 On the Loch Leven road pass out of sight.
And with her fades the fame of its past day—
 Till, in the fire the Roundheads set alight,
 Grim, over-zealous men, it dies away,
With the charred ruins smouldering out in ashes grey.

